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American Art Journal.

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THE MUSICAL FESTIVAL WEEK.

The week devoted to the Festival opened most auspiciously, as regards the weather, for the sun shone brilliantly, the air was fresh and balmy, and it really seemed as though the elements were inclined to favor the brilliant enterprise of Mr. L. F. Harrison. A prolonged thunder storm, however, towards evening, on Monday, very probably kept away one or two hundred casual visitors, but an audience of at least twenty-five hundred people was present, to accommodate which the doors of the small hall were opened, and thus four or five hundred more seats were added.

The result of the performance of Monday night proves triumphantly that Watson's ART JOURNAL is an institution holding a controlling influence, the recent articles on the "Messiah" in its columns having served to change the whole tempi of the various choral movements of that grand oratorio. The example set by Dr. James Peeh, at the recent Trinity Choir Festival, was disapproved of by almost the entire press of New York. All the learned critics protested against the general slowness of the choral tempi. The ART JOURNAL alone, sustained his position, and our approval has caused Mr. Ritter to fly in the face of the great body of writers, and adopt the "time" of Dr. Peeh which we approved. We own to feeling flattered at this public deference to our opinion, but we are still more gratified at the beneficial results of its adoption, upon the performance of the work in question.

We were satisfied when we heard the movement of the opening instrumental fugue, that Mr. Ritter had reflected upon the subject, and had permitted common sense to sway him, rather than personal vanity. The Introduction and Fugue were well emphasized and clearly played. The recitative, "Comfort ye my People," and the aria, "Every valley," were taken in just time, and were very carefully accompanied, as was evidenced by the immediate closing up of the gaps in time made frequently by the singer, who clipped very many of the passages of their just proportions. It would be a mockery to criticize Mr. William Castle as a singer of oratorio music, for at present he has but a very faint perception of its demands, and possesses but few requisites of education which would warrant him assuming the position. Only the most refined and cultivated artist can attempt the rendering of this music successfully. It requires, also, high musical intelligence, and thoughtful comprehension. The poetry itself, a grand inspiration, wedded to music of so masculine a character, demands

a vocal rhetorical power but rarely to be found in singers of the English school. Mr. Castle sang fully up to his powers, and deserves much credit for accomplishing so arduous a task as well he did. His first recit. and aria was his best performance. The treble aria, "But thou didst not leave," which was allotted him most absurdly, is neither suited for a man's voice nor for a man's expression, and the powerful aria, "Thou shalt break them," taxed his voice beyond its power.

Madame Ritter is a pains-taking and, we believe, an earnest artist, but she was out of place in this work, as it displayed most unpleasantly the weak middle notes of her voice. Neither is her style suited to such music, and nothing could be in worse taste than the introduction of a forced and imperfect tremolo, however effective it might be with the unthinking portion of the audience.

Mrs. Zolda Harrison-Seguin acquitted herself thoroughly well, singing with feeling and expression, and using her fine voice with taste and judgment.

The peerless Parepa-Rosa is certainly not peerless in the music of the "Messiah." She phrased her recitatives well, and she vocalized "Rejoice Greatly" with the utmost perfection, but the life, the inspiration was not there. It was simply a vocalise executed as only Parepa could execute it. Almost the same may be said of "I know that my Redeemer liveth." In this she was somewhat more emphatic, but the fervor, the warmth, and the deep spirit of Christian faith, were but faintly represented in her interpretation. We could not sufficiently admire the sustained B flat (which is not in the score) at the close of "Come unto Him." No more exquisite note ever came from the throat of a human nightingale; it was the uttermost perfection of tone, although the taste which suggested its introduction was very questionable.

Mr. J. R. Thomas is the most thorough Handelian singer of the whole party, he interprets the music with the utmost fidelity, and although lacking, now and then, in vigorous emphasis, he enters fully into the spirit of the subjects, interpreting them through his pure style and highly cultivated and unctuous voice, in the most effective manner. His part was, however, shorn of half its importance, by the omission of two of the finest songs, "But who may abide" and "Thou art gone up on high." The tempo of the air, "The people that walked in darkness," was taken too fast, and the orchestral accompaniment was sadly deficient in the *legato*, groping effect. A very bad effect was produced in this solo, through the neglect of the Conductor, in closing with the orchestra before the singer had closed. With a careful and experienced conductor, this could hardly have happened.

The chorus, as far as the singing was concerned, acquitted themselves most admirably,

and for what they lacked, the Conductor must be held responsible. Such, for instance, as the imperfect rendering of the words, the importance of which is forcibly illustrated in the chorusses—"And the Glory of the Lord," "Glory to God in the highest," "Lift up your heads," "He trusted in God," and the "Hallelujah." In these, the emphasis on the words reveals and marks the individual character of the composition, imparting to, or robbing the music of, its true spirit. Too little attention is paid by conductors to this important point; they generally look to the correct accomplishment of the notes as the beginning and the end of everything, and not until the drill in emphasis is as thorough as that in execution, will Handel's chorusses be rendered as the composer intended them, or as common sense so plainly indicates.

The corrected tempo of Mr. Ritter afforded the chorusses a fair chance to be comprehended, and the majesty of the movements was felt and appreciated by all present. The "Hallelujah" chorus, though grandly sung, was taken a trifle too fast, making the short notes appear too hurried, and deteriorating from the massive dignity of the movement. This choral masterpiece, when given with due weight, rarely escapes an imperative encore.

In all respects the performance on Monday night was the best ever given by the Harmonic Society under the directorship of Mr. Ritter. The outside assistance added materially to the effect, of course, but the singers had been well drilled, vocally; they were prompt and decided in taking up the leading points, and their intonation was unimpeachable. A more wretched platform for choral performances than that at Steinway Hall, can hardly be imagined. The trebles are stationed on a level with and behind the band, and have to sing through it; the consequence of which is, that fully one half of their power is lost, and the necessary balance with the other groups of voices is not maintained. Nearly all the passages commencing in low notes for the sopranos, were inaudible from the above cause.

Mr. F. L. Ritter has greatly improved as a conductor; his beat is more firm, and he has acquired more control over the elements under his charge; he seems to grasp the score with more ease, but his conducting still lacks greatly in all the finer details of artistic coloring. We must candidly state, however, that we were agreeably disappointed in the results of his labors.

Although not in the programme of the Festival, and perhaps a little out of place in the midst of a grave criticism, we feel obliged to inscribe here a brilliant conundrum made by Mr. L. F. Harrison, and told to us by him with great success—"Why is the Editor of the ART JOURNAL like a young girl whose thoughts are constantly running upon matrimony?" The comparison, though flattering,

not presenting to our mind any striking points of similitude, we gave it up at once; upon which we received the following crushing answer: "Because he has always got a 'ring' in his eye!" We think it a capital conundrum, and it is quite true. We have a "ring" in our eye, and although it is not a valuable ring, and does not cost much to buy, still we think it worth while to watch it very carefully, and to now and then exhibit it before the public for a special sort of admiration.

SECOND PERFORMANCE OF THE FESTIVAL.—The programme for Tuesday evening consisted of the overture to "Othello," by Mr. F. L. Ritter, a new "Forty-sixth Psalm," by Mr. F. L. Ritter, and the "Hymn of Praise," by Mendelssohn. The first glance at this programme suggests the possibility that there may be a little too much Ritter, but then as Mr. Ritter is the Conductor, he certainly ought to know what is the best music to do.

The overture of "Othello" is not sufficiently marked in character to enable us to form an idea as to at what point Mr. Ritter has taken up the story of "Othello," and we believe if it had merely been called a concert overture, that its descriptive qualities would not have suggested any illustrations of any passages in the sad and eventful history of the unhappy Moor. A green youth behind us repeating the title, suggested to a friend that they would know when Othello came in by the nigger music. But the overture ended without Othello becoming visible to the speaker. The overture is excellent in form, there are some glimpses of tender melody, and the instrumentation is free, the writer having evidently a full mastership of orchestral resources. The music of this overture is well made, the subjects are consecutive and appropriate, but it has no personal identity. Close similarity and imitations are frequent, though without verbal copying, and we did not find any strong point that gave evidence of creative ability. It is well made music, brilliantly and effectively scored. At its close it was very warmly applauded.

The "Forty-sixth Psalm," composed by Mr. Ritter, is a work of much pretension, and in its degree of merit it met with and deserved success. It must inevitably come under the head of scholastic music—music which is planned out with mathematical precision by a well-read theorist, but which partakes in no way of the character of inspiration. It is to the works of the great masters as is the labor of the mason to the soaring fancy of the architect; it is mechanical and according to rule, but it betrays no spark of that electric genius which touches the heart and compels at once intelligent and spontaneous admiration. It however contains points of excellence deserving of attention. The subject of the opening chorus is good, the fugue is well treated, the

melody agreeable, and both the voicing and the instrumentation are good and effective. No. 2 recit. and aria, is excellent in subject and is well sustained. It is dramatically descriptive, and is well colored in the instrumentation. But both in this number and in No. 3, both of which are unquestionably clever, we are inevitably carried back to the models from which they are derived, and we have to estimate them in that relation. On the second return to words "He uttered," in No. 3, Mr. Ritter has attained a magnificent sonorous climax, which is unquestionably remarkable in its grandeur. Towards the close of this movement, the subject was either too crowded, as we believe, or the tempo was too rapid, producing much indistinctness and confusion.

In No. 4 recitative and chorus, the answering of the solo and chorus is very effective. The aria No. 5 is pleasing and flowing in melody, and is richly instrumented. The reminiscence of Mendelssohn is here very palpable. No. 6 is a good fugue subject, but the tempo was so rapid, and the orchestral accompaniments were so thundering, that the matter and form of the movement were indistinguishable. At the close of the work, the applause was very warm, and Mr. Ritter may be said to have achieved a success in that degree which belongs to clever, but second class music.

The opening notes of the Lobgesang (Hymn of Praise) took us at once into the highest atmosphere of art, and opened up to us a rich store of glorious imaginings from the ever fresh fountains of pure inspiration. Mendelssohn's music has all the bloom of youth in its utterances—of a youth which is everlasting; every phrase is pregnant with meaning, and every measure goes to the heart. It possesses at once the dignity of science and the outspoken evidences of the highest power of imagination, and the deepest and tenderest of human sympathies.

The whole of the first movement of the instrumental introduction was taken too fast; its dignity was compromised and its true intent obscured. The allegro was taken in correct time, and accurately played, but in a manner void of tenderness and sentiment. The adagio however was finally performed, and with more color than any movement during the evening. Both the first chorus and solo and semi-chorus were taken a shade too fast. At the opening of the soprano solo, the conductor and the band were at loggerheads, and for eight bars the most horrible confusion reigned, the basses alone continuing to give support to the singer. It was disgraceful alike to the conductor and the orchestra.

Madame Parepa-Rosa sang the music allotted her very charmingly, but her manner seems strangely phlegmatic. We miss the spirit, the *vim*, which formed so large a portion of the charm of her singing some months

ago. Still, all she did was sweet and perfect in its way.

Miss Evelino Reed was quite acceptable in the little she had to do.

Mr. W. J. Hill, though unequal in his singing, rendered much of his music excellently well. He has really a fine voice, which, if he thoroughly understood and could control its powers, would be equal to any demands upon it. He articulated well, and displayed both energy and passion, far exceeding our anticipations of his abilities.

The lovely duet and chorus, "I waited for the Lord," was the executive gem of the evening, being tenderly and charmingly rendered.

The other chorusses were well sung as to the mere accuracy of the notes, but of spirit, decision, or light or shade, we could discover no evidence. The material of the chorus is, undoubtedly, good; but beyond the usual note-training, they have everything to learn. That they do not know these things is not the fault of the singer, but of the conductor.

The Wednesday Matinee we were unable to attend, but we understand that it was well attended, and that the performance gave great satisfaction. The following artists appeared: Miss Henrietta Beebe, Miss Nettie Sterling, Mr. W. J. Hill, Mr. S. C. Campbell, and Mr. A. H. Pease.

Haydn's fresh and lovely oratorio, "The Creation," was given on Wednesday evening, the third day of the Festival, and was fairly rendered throughout. The hall was crowded to overflowing in every part; there must have been between three and four thousand persons present, and the heat was something indescribable. It was not merely summer-heat—it was heat demoniacal.

Madame Parepa-Rosa sang "With verdure clad" very charmingly, her pure, clear voice, untaxed, permeating the whole hall with its delicious tones. We were not as well pleased with her rendering of "On mighty pens." It lacked dramatic conception, but in the third part, her singing with Mr. Thomas was all that could be desired.

Mr. George Simpson sang the music of *Uriel* very effectively and with much taste and expression. It is one of his most successful efforts.

Mr. J. R. Thomas fully sustained the high position now awarded him, as the best Oratorio singer in the United States. Some of the music taxes the compass of his voice too much, but his artistic management ameliorates the difficulty without compromising the composer. His singing throughout the evening was very fine, and called forth continued acknowledgments from the audience. In one of his dramatic recitatives, Mr. Thomas had the luck to be extensively sacrificed by the conductor and the orchestra, both forgetting that there was a singer in the case, and pursuing their own

course without any reference to him. This could not have occurred with a competent conductor.

The choral portion of the Creation exhibited the same excellencies and glaring deficiencies which have been noticeable at all the performances. Notwithstanding the improvement that we have noticed in certain points of Mr. Ritter's conducting, there is such glaring evidence of material wants in his system, that we are compelled to say that he occupies a position which a more competent executive musician should have occupied. His selection as conductor was an error in the beginning. Great Festivals are not gotten up to help novices to gain experience. Only the best men should have been chosen, and only the most perfect performances should have been given, in order that the next year's announcement might at once command the interest and the respect of the public.

We shall review the remaining performances of the Festival in our next issue.

OPENING OF THE CONCERT SEASON, AT TERRACE GARDEN.

Thousands will hail with delight the re-opening of this most delightful place of amusement. The undertaking was commenced in doubt last year, for out-of-door music in connection with Gardens, was by no means popular with the better class of our citizens—in point of fact it was not considered respectable—but it resulted in a most triumphant success, artistically, and it would have been very profitable also but for the bad weather which prevailed during the four last weeks.

The names of Mr. Theodore Thomas, Mr. Eben and Mr. Gosche being associated with the enterprise gave immediate assurance of its perfect respectability, and from the first night the audience was composed of the leading families of the city, together with a large proportion of artistic celebrities.

The coming season promises to be extremely brilliant. Mr. Theodore Thomas is now in Europe, and will bring with him on his return, all the striking novelties he can find in the musical cities of the Continent. The orchestra has been re-formed and several new *Virtuosi* are promised to be brought forward during the season.

Mr. Eben will conduct the Concerts until the return of Mr. Thomas, and he is a most able and worthy substitute. He is familiar with the whole repertoire of instrumental music, is an accomplished musician, and is a firm, spirited and effective conductor. The orchestra is safe in his hands.

The season will open on Monday evening next June 10th, when a brilliant programme will be presented. Terrace Garden (Third Avenue between 58th and 59th streets) has been very much beautified in anticipation of

the event, and visitors will find their favorite place of resort fresh and pleasant, with added attractions and conveniences.

CONCERT OF MRS. JULIA MORRIS, AT HARLEM.

Mrs. Julia Morris, a lady well known in musical circles, gave her first concert at the National Hall, Harlem, on Tuesday evening last, assisted by Miss Hutchings, Mr. Thatcher, Mr. Wm. K. Bassford and Mr. I. B. Poznanski. Mr. Dible accompanying. There was a very large attendance.

Mrs. Morris, who has a very sweet voice, sang several selections in a charming and expressive manner, and gained the warm sympathy and applause of the audience. Mrs. Morris is very and deservedly popular in this locality, and the announcement of her name is a sure attraction.

Miss Hutchings is an unpretending but very excellent singer; she has a fine contralto voice which she uses with skill and judgment, and as she sings with much taste and expression, she cannot fail to make a success wherever she sings. On this occasion she deserved and received most cordial recognition for her efforts.

Mr. Wm. K. Bassford, whose touch on the piano is delicious, repeated by general request, his exquisite little tone poem called the "Jealous Stream," to the manifest delight of the audience. It is so fanciful and so tender, and he plays it with so refined and delicate an expression, that it must always prove an effective and fascinating salon piece. When published it will certainly command a very large sale. Mr. Thatcher sang very pleasantly, and contributed much to the enjoyment of the evening.

Mr. I. B. Poznanski made a very marked sensation on this occasion, winning all the honors that could be bestowed by an audience. We never heard him play as well as he did on Tuesday evening. The most marked success of his performance was in two new compositions by himself. One an Adagio, and the other a most effective bagatelle, called the "Mocking Bird." The first is a movement of rare beauty; grave, sustained and full of passionate and eloquent tenderness. It is, moreover, a splendid bit of harmony, and shows how thorough a musician and how instinct with art Mr. Poznanski is. He played it superbly, and his broad and deep expression affected the audience visibly. It was a great success, and so was his "Mocking Bird," which is full of life and spirit, sweet in melody, quaint in character, and popular in every way. Mr. Poznanski was encored in all he played, and the people went away evidently wishing to hear him play still more.

It was altogether a very pleasant concert, comprising features of great excellence, and the people of Harlem should be grateful to artists who will travel so far to afford them so much pleasure.

M. Danccke, the composer and critic gathered the elite of the musical and literary world at his rooms in Paris, a few days since. There were present Berlioz, Rezer, Kreutzer, Schuloff, Mathias, Massart and many authors.

MATTERS THEATRIC.

O the dull and dreary Theatres;
O the flat and stupid Theatres;
Ever "Black Crook," "Black Crook," "Black Crook,"
Ever "Scud" and "Troven Treasure";
Ever smaller, smaller, smaller,
Grows the chance of all things novel;
Ever greater, greater, greater,
Grows the love for legs and horses,
At the Broadway, Lucille Western
Plays "East Lynne" and *Is-a-belle*;
Up at Niblo's, centipedal
"Black Crook" puts its best leg forth;
Sophie, Irene, rattling Jennie
Play burlesques, and promise "Faust";
"Flying Scud," encased in soap suds,
Holds the stage at Wallack's still;
While we're threatened, luckless mortals!
With a dose of Irish Drama,
In the shape of Daniel Bryant,
Daniel once a negro minstrel,
Now an actor and a star!
Hapless people, hapless critic,
Hapless drama, hapless art,
Horses, pigs, and other cattle,
Stars are now in place of men.
Angels that are well *col* &
Take the place of actors now;
Newsboys dance the playful clog dance;
Pigs run races on the stage;
"Moral dramas," most immoral,
Draw forth tears to great extent;
Horses fret and fume their hour;
Brass bands play their dulcet strains;
Waterfalls go leaping downward;
Patrick wields the short shillalah;
And the drama's come to grief.

SHUGGE.

NOTES OF TRAVEL.

V.

PARIS, May 1st.

DEAR MR. WATSON: Yesterday when I returned from my music lesson at Professor Stamaty's, I found a large packet, with the Paris post mark, addressed to me lying upon my table. Upon examination I perceived through its thin envelope, several sheets of printed matter, and I mentally decided that it was the advertisement of some generous wine vendor, or the enticing circular of a fashionable modiste; but upon opening it great was my joy to find several slips cut from the ART JOURNAL, and a most agreeably long letter from my *chère amie*, and your fascinating contributor "Minette." This is the first time since my departure from New York (Feb. 2d), that my eyes have been delectated with even a dismembered portion of the ART JOURNAL, and I leave you to guess which portion of the contents of the packet caused the greatest excitement. I came here with the expectation of doing many things besides studying Music, but so absorbing and exacting have I found this divine Art under Professor Stamaty's excellent instruction, that I find little time for letter writing. Every week I see and enjoy many things that I wish to transmit to your paper, both in private Art circles and in its more proper domain, the opera, concerts, etc.,